



DEVOTION BY THE 12TH KEDNTING TAI SITUPA

I would like to discuss one of the most important teachings and practices, the fundamental, basic practice of the Vajrayana – devotion. In the Vajrayana devotion is the most important thing, but it is a little difficult to express because it is not that politically correct. Compassion is more politically correct. I can talk about compassion to anybody, but when I talk about devotion, I have to be very clear and quite sure about who I am talking to. I consider all of you to be very serious about the dharma, however, not just experimenting, so I must talk to you about devotion.

The foundation of devotion is confidence in your essence. If you don't have confidence in your essence, you cannot have true devotion; it becomes more like fear than devotion. In the Mahayana Buddha taught bodhichitta. Bodhichitta is your essence. The thought, "I wish to become a Buddha to show all sentient beings how to become Buddhas," is bodhichitta. On the way we may also wish to alleviate other beings' suffering and so on, but the ultimate goal is for them to become Buddhas. We need a lot of confidence in ourselves to enable us to say this. Each one of us, no matter what kind of façade we put on, has thousands of problems and shortcomings. We know we do. We don't have to exhibit them to others, it is not necessary, but we have to know about them ourselves. We need to know we have attachment, anger, jealousy, pride, ignorance – all of them – and that each one of us has more than enough of these defilements.

Not only do we have these defilements but the amount of karma each of us has committed because of these defilements is enormous. Each one of us has lived countless lifetimes trying to fulfill our big or little dreams. In order to achieve them we have done so many things. Sometimes we have experienced a little tweak of conscience over what we have done and become more careful, but at other times with no conscience we have been ruthless and caused a lot of harm to others. I am sure each one of us has behaved like this countless times. We can see the results now. If we want to do good things now we have to work very hard at it. If we are not careful, without even realizing it we do

not-so-good things.

For example, if a mosquito lands here and bites me, I could very easily swat it. It is very easy – even automatic. What we have done, we do. All this mosquito did was to try to take a little blood from me. It may have even been good for me. In fact, it would definitely have been good for me because I have high blood pressure. I have too much blood. A hundred simultaneous mosquito bites would be good for me. Unless of course they had malaria, then it would be good for my doctors. By going to the doctors I would give them work, they could go to their clinic and sell some medicine. I would get well and they would make money.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, my doctor refuses to take money from me. I buy medicine from pharmacists, but my doctor will not take money from me. If I get sick it does not really benefit me, but it will benefit him because he then has the opportunity to be generous. He considers me a follower of the Buddha, as someone special, so he treats me for free. This is a good habit for him but a little difficult for me to digest. I need a good stomach to digest my doctor's generosity. My stomach has to be pure, strong, healthy and genuine, otherwise digesting other people's service and donations is not easy. If you don't have the stomach for it, it could short-circuit your merit.

In the Mahayana, Lord Buddha taught about motivation; specifically the motivation "to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings." For this motivation you need full confidence in yourself. You need to believe you can become a Buddha. You can develop this kind of confidence in yourself by knowing what a Buddha is. If you do not know this your motivation will become egotistic, an ambition. The motivation "I wish to become a Buddha" is not egotistic or ambitious. It is a truth and a destination. My essence and the essence of the Crown Prince Siddhartha, before he became a Buddha, are the same. Buddha called this essence the Buddha-nature, the *Dewa shegpa nyingpo* in Tibetan, the *Tathagata-garbha* in Sanskrit and the *Fau-shing* in Chinese. It is the Buddha-essence that is in everyone. It is our essence and

knowing this, having faith in this, is the basis of devotion.

If you don't have faith in this truth, and still try to be devoted, this devotion may become fearful. We describe some types of devotion in this way: "law-abiding," "God-fearing." When people say this I don't really know what they mean. I am not saying it is wrong, I just don't recognize it. In Buddhism we do not fear the Buddha. If we do something bad we may go to hell, or somewhere else not so good, but the Buddha does not send us there. It is not the Buddha punishing us. Buddhas do not have torture chambers or implements of torture – they are embodiments of compassion and wisdom.

This doesn't mean we can hide anything from the Buddha though. If we do something that nobody knows about, we may think the Buddhas do not know about it either, but they are in front of us all the time. Some people make little shrines in their houses and when they are in front of them they behave very, very well. They change their clothes before they come into the shrine room, they walk on their knees and try not to think of anything unbecoming. Doing all of this is wonderful, it is an excellent gesture, we should do it and it is meritorious, but if we do these things thinking the Buddha is only present in the shrine room and not everywhere else then we don't understand the Buddha. The Buddha is everywhere. We should have a shrine, keep it clean and not engage in worldly activities before it – we shouldn't keep our business desk in that area, our kitchen or our fridge – but we do these things because of ourselves, because *we* are dualistic, because we are doing our best in our own dualistic way to respect the Buddha.

It is like taking your shoes off, but not your socks. In India we take our shoes off outside every respected place – our parents' home, religious places, and our teachers' room. We take our shoes off outside the door, but we don't take our socks off. Sometimes it may even be better to go in with your shoes on! If you go shopping, then to lunch, then for a nice walk in the very nice park near here called Loti Gardens, and then came back here I would prefer you did not take off your shoes. That would be more polite and meritorious!

Anyway we do our best, so that is fine. We take off our shoes, we behave very nicely, we are super-duper good in front of our shrine and that is wonderful, but it does not mean the Buddha is only there. The Buddha is in the



park, in the restaurant, in your office, in your street, in your car. The Buddha is everywhere. In the same way that wherever you go so does your shadow, the Buddha is everywhere. The Buddha is omniscient – you can't hide anything from the Buddha. We need to know this as well. If we know this and still keep a nice clean shrine that is good.

Without knowing this we may develop strange ideas about the Buddha and become afraid. If we fear the Buddha we will lose our confidence. Someone like Hercules may be happy that a lion has gotten loose but without this confidence the rest of us will hide under the table. Whether hiding will help I don't know, but we will anyway, leaving Hercules to stand up and manhandle the lion. Without confidence we have fear. Bodhichitta is confidence and with this confidence comes devotion.

When I say "devotion" I mean that which we direct towards our dharma masters. I have respect for my music teacher but not devotion. Not that I am learning piano, but if I was a teacher would come to my house every week, once or twice, and I would pay them a fee. I would learn from this teacher and respect him or her because he or she would be teaching me something I don't know. I would not be devoted to him or her, however, because although I want to learn piano I don't want to become like him or her. My ultimate devotion is to the Buddha because I want to become like Buddha and I have devotion for my dharma masters because in the process of becoming like the Buddha, I want to become like them. This is the difference between respect and devotion.

I don't know how worldly people outside the dharma community think about devotion and respect, but in a dharma context devotion is based on your potential. I have the potential to become a Buddha and as Prince Siddhartha already achieved this I want to become like him, hence my ultimate devotion is to the Buddha. This devotion also continues down through his lineage. I am devoted to my guru, because my guru transmitted the blessing of the Buddha's lineage to me. For me he is the Buddha's substitute. He may have the body of the sangha, but his teaching is the Buddha's teaching. His mind is a treasury of the Buddha's teaching because he or she – it doesn't matter which – received it from their master with devotion. In this way devotion is very important.



the SACRED OUTLOOK
by HIS EMINENCE
THE THIRD JAMGON KONGTRUL RINPOCHE

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translated from Tibetan by Ngodrub Burkhar

The subject is the impure outlook or cognition in the light of the pure or sacred outlook. I want to explain how confusion can be seen from the vast perspective of knowledge or wisdom, the basis of the Buddhadharma. Experiencing confusion as enlightenment isn't a mental imposition. Apprehending the pure – confusion as wisdom – isn't a mentally fabricated attitude simply adopted as something foreign to the mind. Experiencing confusion as enlightenment means ascertaining ourselves as we truly are. When Buddha Shakyamuni turned the wheel of the third dharmachakra, he clearly showed his pupils that all beings without exception are equally endowed with the Buddha nature, which is inherently pure and sacred.

All beings without exception possess the Buddha nature, the tathagatagarbha or the matrix of Buddhahood, “the womb of the Tathagatas” or Buddhas. How do we eliminate defilements so that our inherent Buddha nature unfolds? We need to win a proper understanding of the view and then engage in the purification practices so that impure cognition becomes pure. Because without knowing what impurity actually is, a change cannot occur. We first need to distinguish between the pure and the impure view of reality.

What is the impure view? Erroneously believing in truly existing mental abstractions about the world and our experiences. Assumptions about apprehended phenomena within and without are the actual defilements concealing purity. When will all the impure layers of false notions cease? How can we become free of impure mental suppressions? Can we flee? Can we discard them? Should we think so, we would entertain further false notions.

Impure cognition concerns the mind, which, as I have

explained on various occasions, is by nature undefiled and stainless. Due to the incidental obscurations concealing the mind, we experience the repeated and incessant perpetuation of incidental habits, emotions, and the like. Incidental means occurring suddenly and by chance, and describes that state foreign and accidental to the true nature of the mind. A confused mind does not permanently exist since incidental obstacles are foreign to the mind and are transitory.

As long as we cling to the basic mental obstacle of thinking apprehended things permanently exist as they appear to us, we will be confused. Further, while we cling to another basic mental obstacle by thinking things don't exist at all, we experience an impure outlook.

Impure views are stubborn beliefs of eternalism and nihilism. The Buddhadharma teaches that impurity can be experienced from a pure outlook; confusion can be cognized as wisdom. What does this mean? Wisdom is ascertaining the true nature of existents; it is free of the two extreme suppositions that claim concrete and abstract